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ABSTRACT

Papers on children's services presented at the 1984 IFLA general conference include: (1) "Children's Literature in Kenya: Staggering Problems, Limited Successes, and Some Signs of Hope" (Ellen Kitonga, Kenya), which identifies some basic problems with respect to children's literature in Africa and suggests possible courses of action; (2) "Public Libraries Are Fantastic: Promotion of Reading and Library Use in Cooperation with Authors, Unions, Schools, and Other Institutions" (Margareta Torngren, Sweden), which describes unconventional methods currently used in Sweden to reach new and inexperienced readers and suggests additional strategies; (3) "Promoting Children's Library Work and Reading Habits in Africa" (Gloria E. Dillsworth, Sierra Leone) which examines the library situation in many of the developing countries in Africa, identifies general problems, and discusses book exhibitions, seminars, and future plans; and (4) "Education and Training of Children's Librarians in Africa" (Virginia W. Dike, Nigeria) which surveys library services and types of personnel providing such services for children in Africa, and addresses the issue of education and training. (THC)

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# Children's Literature in Kenya: Staggering Problems, Limited Successes, and Some Signs of Hope

by

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Writer of Educational Books for Children

(Nairobi, Kenya)

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## Introduction

Early in 1970 I began working for the Kenya Institute of Education in what was then the Foreign Languages Education Section. My first task was to help write and test a lower primary English course for Standards (grades) one to three. Later I was to work with the team preparing the Safari English Course for upper primary (then Standards four to seven). This involved visiting control and experimental classes across the country, and gave me even more of a feel for what would or would not be accepted in the classroom - what stories or poems would be most enjoyed. Working next for a multinational publisher, I carried on the editing and language grading of children's books by local authors, and soon felt ready to join their ranks. Since then I have continued to write to meet the needs of young Kenyan readers of English. Like Eilen Waungana, I try out these attempts on my own children and those of my friends and colleagues. Not that my books have all been published. Right now, for example, I have both a "Telling Time 'Round the Clock'" book for early readers and a collection of short stories for adolescents, "Tales for Our Time." No publisher will touch either of them, since they do not fit neatly into a gap in the school syllabus.

This is the basic barrier to children's literature in Kenya. Children's literature in any language is rarely published unless a market is guaranteed through adaptation by the Kenya School Equipment Scheme (K.S.E.S.), the central book-buying body for Kenya's primary schools which cover the first (mandatory) eight years of education.

## Staggering Problems

The basic facts about children's literature in Kenya are these:

(1) few books are produced locally;

(2) fewer still reach the average child;

(3) libraries are also few - and often understocked and understaffed;

(4) there is no book-buying habit among the general public;

(5) reading is done as an activity aimed at bettering one's chances of passing an exam (thus gaining success and/or money) or as a form of escape from reality, not as a means of altering that reality or one's attitude towards it.

Underlying all these aspects of children's literature are financial constraints. Where money is sorely needed - at the family level for food, clothing, shelter, education and transport; and at the national level for development efforts - reading for pleasure or even for general knowledge is a low priority. In a country where adult literacy efforts are still underway, it is the rare child who can indulge his or her reading habit. Those who can are generally part of a small elite, and are more likely to read English or American works such as Enid Blyton's Famous Five, the Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys series.

This may be deplorable, but local books have so far just not been produced in significant quantities. The truth of the matter was cogently summed up in Henry Chakava's "Publishing in a Multilingual Situation: the Kenya Case."[1] The very linguistic range of our society - in which approximately 30% are literate in English, 60% in Swahili and 30% in various African languages - splits the market so that print runs are too low for decent profits. Children's books present additional problems, both financial and technical. Publishing children's books requires specialised expertise in writing, editing and illustrating; financially such publishing is always a risk and often a loss. Both language structure and vocabulary must be carefully graded; appropriate illustrations, usually in colour, are another necessity. For use in schools

or libraries, strong and durable covers and binding are a must.

The ideal, however, is almost impossible to attain. Adding a second and third colour to the first colour (that of the text) increases the cost of a book by 12% for each.[2] A plate must be made for each colour, and the sheets of paper must pass through the printing machine once for each colour, adding to the machine time charged for. In addition, local artists have to be trained to use the right paints and paper, and to match colours most carefully. As for binding, shorter books are wire-stitched (stapled) and longer ones threadsewn. There can be no thought of publishing hardcover editions as the cost is simply too prohibitive (though I will mention an exception later on). Whereas in 1979 the cost of adding a hardcover, regardless of bokk length or print run, was six shillings per copy; in 1980-81 it has risen to ten shillings. My informant did not know the current cost, though he felt it might be as high as fifteen shillings; there simply was no occasion to find out.[3]

To survive, publishers concentrate on producing texts for the Kenya School Equipment Scheme. In 1977, Henry Chakava estimated that 85% of Kenya's book market was educational, and that figure still stands today.[4] Our Government takes education very seriously, yet funds are limited and must stretch across a wide variety of educational needs throughout the country and across the various subject areas at each level.

Limited Successes

"Public"

Books get into the pirmary schools on the recommendation of subject panels and approval by the K.S.E.S. itself. Textbooks account for most of the titles accepted. In the beginning of the 1970s, a book box scheme was set up, however,

to provide classroom libraries in the primary schools. Each Standard in each school in the Republic was provided with a sturdy, lockable wooden box containing multiple copies of a number of books, all carefully chosen for relevance and interest, and graded rigourously with regard to typeface and size, percentage and type of illustration, sentence length and complexity, vocabulary level, and so on. For a while at least, primary school children had a variety of books to read across a range of topics and ability levels. An accompanying booklet provided detailed instructions on running a class library.

Given that the average life of a book in our schools is two to three years, it is lamentable that these supplies were not replenished. What are ordered from time to time are story books forming a integral part of a course, such as the supplementary readers which go with the Progressive Peak English Course for lower primary. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the Ministry of Education, these readers are designed to complement the pupils' books. They are mostly stories for children in modern Kenya from various areas and ethnic groups, though there is one animal tale. Unfortunately, as they were expressly titled "supplementary," it took some time for them to be ordered as part of the course - despite their having been written by officers at the Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E.) and vetted by the appropriate panel as an ongoing process.

The T.K.K. (Tujifunze Kilugha Kikwetu = Let's Learn our Mother Tongue) series, also written under K.I.E. auspices, fares little better in terms of orders. These books were written and translated by teams called in from each linguistic group. They share common illustrations, with the text (involving schoolchildren in the here-and-now) differing with the language involved, even to proper names. Story-telling sessions in the mother tongues supplement the work of these pre- and early readers in the first three Standards.

Private"

The Longman Reading Scheme was written as a rival to the Progressive Peak course. These books of folktales are also carefully graded and well illustrated by a local artist whose cartoons are widely known through the printed media. They are in a standard format and design, and there is an accompanying teacher's guide. These books are bought by parents (usually at the teacher's request) or by schools with private funds.

In contrast, the Lioncub series put out by the East African Publishing House (E.A.P.H.) is not consistent in style or format. It includes such popular titles as Take Me Home, the story of a young schoolleaver who helps a retired bus driver to renovate a wreck of a bus, providing them both with a job, and their village with needed transport. Also by this publishing house is How the Lion Got Its Claws. Co-authored by Chinua Achebe, the book was first published by an indigenous Nigerian publisher, Nwamife Publishing Company. A number of East African how-and why tales, sometimes explicitly titled as such, also are in the series of slow but steady sellers.

A third example, this time from the Oxford University Press, is the Moses series by Barbara Kimenye. These stories describe the schoolboy escapades and minor detective work of a young rascal in a private school in Uganda, and are popular among both boys and girls in the upper primary and lower secondary levels.

"Into the '80s"

The examples given in the previous sections of this paper were produced over the past two decades. Most of the books came out in the mid or late 1960s, soon after Independence, or else (Progressive Peak, Longman Reading Scheme) were funded by the "coffee boom" of the mid 1970s. More recent publishing ventures are Transafrica's Bushbabes series and Kenway's Pichahadithi.

As of the beginning of May 1984 two Bushbabes had been published, while six of the Pichahadithi series were out. Both series are ongoing. The first of the Bushbabes is The Chameleon Who Couldn't Stop Changing His Mind by Sally Nyokabi. The second, co-published with the Kenya Literature Bureau (a parastatal body), is The Flame Tree. The third, tentatively titled Hare and His Home-made Horns, should be published by the time this paper is presented at the Conference. The publisher's comments are well worth considering. John Nottingham states that the publishing of children's literature is a loss operation.[5] Those children's books which he published while at E.A.P.H. were comparatively cheaply done to minimize the extent of the loss. He feels that the East African Readers Library titles might be deemed a modest commercial success but only because they were ordered for the book box scheme. Nottingham produced the Bushbabes for Transafrica more attractively and expensively - yet only about 100 are sold per month. The market is quite revealing. The East African Wildlife Society takes 50 copies of The Chameleon... a month (for the tourist trade), while the Flame Tree sells well largely at the Textbook Centre outlet at the Sarit Centre (catering to upper-class families). He also mentioned How the Zebra Got its Stripes: A Collection of Stories and Pictures by the Children of Kenya. Published by Hutchinson and providing an exception to the cheap binding rule, this hardbound book is bought mainly by the tourist and Kenyan elite.

Some Signs of Hope

There are a few signs of hope for children's literature in Kenya. Let us turn to some other recent and ongoing publishing. Since its launching last October, the Pichahadithi series by Kenway has received a great deal of media advertising. These books are essentially comic strips of Kenya stories from various areas, retold in English and illustrated in full colour by Terry Hirst, who also did the artwork for the Longman Reading Scheme. Selling at five shillings each,

the books are distributed through newspaper vendors in a seemingly successful attempt to reach a larger market. As few as five or as many as the agent thinks he can sell may be had for cash, on a sale-or-return basis, or with an established line of credit.[6]

Another hopeful sign is the recent launching of several books by well-known authors writing in the local languages. Heinemann Educational Books have now published books by such renowned writers for adults as David Maillu, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Asenath Odaga. This time, however, the stories are intended for younger readers, and the undertaking of such an effort on the part of a multinational firm is worthy of note. Previous works in the vernaculars for children had been published by the Literature Bureau, by mission presses, and by small local publishers working in one languages or language group.

We have spoken so far only of books. Yet many more homes, schools and libraries have access to newspapers and magazines than to books. Each of the local English-language newspapers offers at least a weekly children's page - with from one to three children's stories, plus participation from the readers in the form of painting or colouring competitions (using illustrations to the short stories), crossword puzzles, and penpal columns. The stories, which do not appear to be graded, offer a mixture of history, how-and-why tales, and children's everyday affairs or adventures. The Friday edition of the papers costs two shillings and the Sunday edition, two and a half shillings. Sales of the Friday edition of the Standard average 57,000; those of the Sunday Standard average 33,000.[7] We must remember that children's books are printed in quantities of from 7,500 or 20,000 copies - the larger figure often for economy of scale to include sales over a number of years.

Another alternative source of reading matter (if not strictly literature) is the

Rainbow magazine, locally produced with the aim of instructing and entertaining the schoolchildren of Kenya. Again in English, it offers monthly national and international news, notes on science and geography geared to local interests (e.g., the skies for the month, local flora and fauna) with readers sending in essays, stories, and their own crossword and mathematical puzzles. Readers also participate in an annual essay competition on some aspect of ecology, e.g., wise use of wood and water. The winning entries are also published. Sections of the magazine often fold out into calendars or wall-charts, yet another attraction. Of the 18,000 copies printed each month, only 300 go to subscribers - among them 64 schools and 12 libraries.[8] The rest are bought by or for children directly from vendors of shops for three shillings a copy.

How the Librarian Fits In

By now, I can hear mutterings of "What about the libraries? Has she forgotten she is addressing librarians?" No, I haven't forgotten - but wanted to start with the producers of the commodity in question, children's literature. I've already mentioned the book boxes which served as class libraries for the then-seven-year primary system. Perhaps equally important is the Kenya National Library Service which, while not initially as widespread, is a continuing operation.

Designed to cover the needs of the 14 million or more Kenyans who live in the rural areas, it was formed in 1967 and his since expanded so that in 1979 there were children's sections in Nairobi, Mombasa, Embu, Nyeri, Nakuru, Kisumu, Kakamega and Eldoret, with provisions for such facilities in Garissa, Thika and Kisii.[9] There is also at least the possibility of links between the National Library Service and school libraries. Writing on school libraries in Kenya William E. Umbima stated that a school may pay 100/- year for the right to borrow up to 200 books, but added that the scheme had been abandoned in Embu.[10]

Surveying secondary school libraries, he found shortages of staff, of accommodation, of equipment, and of balanced stocks. A more specific survey in Central Province in June/July 1977 revealed a haphazard system of decision making, a lack of direction and motivation - and of finance. Some 60% of the schools with libraries; however inadequate, had abandoned a previously established programme. The researcher found that in one school where he had served as teacher librarian, over 50% of the stock he had acquired at the beginning of the previous year could not be accounted for at the time of the survey. He stressed that students must be taught to value and care for books.[11]

This seems to be done at the Macmillan Library in Nairobi, both downtown and at the two branches in Kaloleni and Eastlands - each with their children's libraries catering for children from pre-primary through From One of the secondary school. There are approximately 20,000 books at the Macmillan itself, 10,000 at Eastlands and 5,000 at Kaloleni. A total membership of almost 1,500 and annual turnover of 25,078 books reflects the two-week borrowing period. While there is sharing among family and friends, there are also problems of wear-and-tear, of pilferage, and of genuine loss. Unfortunately, only a handful of books have been purchased in the past few years.[12]

What books are available there? They are predominantly in English, and of British origin. Shiraz Durrani states that even the K.N.L.S. "admits that 80% of its books come from overseas."[13] (Local books don't last, and the library cannot afford to rebind them.) Of the books available, a survey of borrowings for 1982, 1983 and the first quarter of 1984 revealed that fiction was the most popular, accounting for almost 2/3 of all issues.[14] Second in importance are books in the 300 category - which includes picture books, myths and legends, Next in order of popularity are those in the 500,900, 600 and 700 categories. A comment by Mrs. Wanyama, the woman who now is in charge of the children's section at the

Macmillan, is equally memorable: readers are lost to the K.N.L.S. headquarters library, where they have not only Africana, but also schoolbooks and comics such as Asterix and Tintin. If this is a sad commentary on cultural conditioning, let us hope that it at least augurs well for such "cartoon-style" local books as the Longman Reading Scheme and the Pichahadithi. The idea of schoolbooks is carried through by the correlation between subject areas in the primary-leaving examination and the types of books borrowed. Until this year, one-third of the examination consisted of science (500, 600), history (900) and geography (300). There may be a sign of hope for wider reading now that the range of examinable subjects has been widened.

Conclusion: the challenge

The late, revered S.I.A. Kotei, speaking of children's literature in Ghana, pointed out that "Whether children read for profit or for pleasure, reading is an end in itself, and guided reading leads the child to an awareness of himself and his potentialities."[15] This of course is the ideal. The reality is unfortunately different. He went on to add of rural children in his country, "But they still live on the fringes of a literate culture and therefore even where books are available the harsh realities of life do not permit reading as a developmental activity."[16] In Kenya too there are cows to be milked, water and firewood to be fetched, and younger siblings to be cared for. And of course school work takes precedence in whatever time can be seized for personal "betterment."

The Kenyan child fits all too well this description of the Ghanaian one. "His parents should read to him, but most parents cannot read, and those who can have other preoccupations. [There should be available] here-and-now stories of everyday events, reflecting the youngster's own routines... By the late primary

school years children are supposed to have risen to stories of action, adventure, realism mixed with mystery, humour, mischief, sports and achievement. Indeed, books on these themes are available in our bookshops and libraries, but the context of reference is neither here nor there, except perhaps in their dreams."[17]

If such reading habits and the attitudes underlying them are to be altered, long and hard work will be required of all those concerned with children's literature: parents, teachers, children, education officers, writers, publishers, and, yes, even librarians.

Footnotes

1 African Book Publishing Record Vol. III, No. 2 (April 1977), pp. 83-90.

2 Private conversation with Frederick Ivuku, Oxford University Press, East and Central Africa Branch, 16 April 1984.

3 Ibid.

4 Op. cit. Indeed 80 to 95% is the figure provided for the third world generally in Anthony Rangers, "Reading at a high price," The Standard, May 12 1984, p. 10.

5 Private conversation, 19 April 1984.

6 Telephone conversation with the distributor, Mr. Njagani of Standard Newspapers Ltd., 14 May 1984.

7 Telephone conversation with the Marketing Director, Standard Newspapers Ltd., 14 May 1984.

8 Telephone conversation with the editor and the subscription manager of Rainbow, 14 May 1984.

9 Abraham Philip, "Organization and Management of Rural Village Libraries," Maktaba Vol. 7, No. 2 (1983), p. 45; P.A. Gakuru, "Kenya National Library Service to Children," Maktaba Vol. 6, No. 1 (June 1979).

10 "School Libraries in Kenya," Maktaba Vol. 7, No. 1 (1982).

11 W. Kinyanjui, "Secondary School Library Facilities in Central Province, Kenya - A Survey Report," Maktaba Vol. 6, No. 1.

12 Information on these Nairobi City Commission libraries was acquired through interviews with Messrs. Ojiambo and Opondo and with Ms. Wanyama, 14 and 16 April 1984. They and the branch librarians kindly provided me with copies of their annual and quarterly reports, of Maktaba, and of the African Book Publishing Record.

13 "Libraries and rural development," Ideas and Action 154 (1983/6), p. 8.

14 The exact figures are as follows: fiction (65.74%), 300 (6.88%), 500 (5.85%), 900 (4.09%), 600 (3.73%) and 700 (2.38%). Figures for the Kaloleni branch show an even greater preference for fiction, which accounted for 80.93% of the issues in 1982, 80.45% in 1983, and 80.58% in the first quarter of 1984.

15 "Themes for Children's Literature in Ghana," African Book Publishing Record, Vol. IV, No. 4 (October 1978), p. 234.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., p. 239.

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11 Pearce, Douglas. Textbook Production in Developing Countries - Some Problems of Preparation, Production and Distribution, Studies on Books and Reading No. 7, UNESCO, updated (1980/1981?).

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IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE, NAIROBI 1984

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Section: Joint meeting of the Sections Children's libraries and Public libraries

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# Public libraries are fantastic: promotion of reading and library use in cooperation with authors, unions, schools and other institutions

by

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Lund, Sweden

THE LIBRARY IS FANTASTIC

In Sweden many things seem to be fantastic just now. The tourist organizations advertise that Sweden is fantastic (you are so welcome here to see if that is correct). A commercial centre in the capital is of course fantastic, the car Toyota is fantastic. The public libraries in Sweden which a few years ago completely dissociated themselves from the tricks of the commercial marketing introduced last year the slogan 'The library is fantastic' in connection with the nationwide library campaign.

Public libraries have awoken from their quiet way awaiting existence to which we have accustomed people and passed on to more aggressive campaigns for the book, the reading and for making people discover the libraries and make them realize that the library is something unique with all its resources and possibilities, with its openness and non-existent demands. There is no other institution which can take over that role.

What is new is also that the libraries do not work alone. They co-operate with local branches of the trade unions, writers' societies, study organizations, schools, etc. Different activities get financial support from the State and the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs. The minister of education has expressed himself in the following way:

"Those who have a positive view of books also look positively on freedom of speech, education and culture and can never accept a one-dimensional outlook on man. He is a combination of will, feeling and intellect, something that both the technocrat and the confirmed romantic may have difficulty in accepting."

The reader of fiction becomes according to the minister of education a human ideal which we must recognize and stand up for in the society which is developing and more and more

will be marked by technology and computerization. The book becomes a symbol of the humanism we must maintain in order to preserve a human society. But that does not mean that we refuse technology.

Thus strong forces are at work which are also strengthened by the fact that two Government commissions have just now published their thoughts on the future of the book and the public libraries.
The library commission declares that:
- public libraries are to fight for the book and the reading. They are to have an open mind towards all the media but special responsibility for the book and the printed word. Borrowing should be free.
- further, public libraries are to work for a free and equal supply of information. Computerized procurement of information should be free, too.
- public libraries must work more consciously to penetrate society with their services for children and young people at day nurseries and schools, for adults at places of work, for old people at homes for the aged, etc. Public libraries must find a team of assistants, of book and library representatives.
- public libraries are to pay special attention to children's need of books and reading.

LIBRARY CAMPAIGNS

The two commissions point out that there are two fields that are of particular importance to work upon. They are the collaboration of the libraries with school and with the places of work. So it is exactly for these fields that some campaigns of the last few years are intended. I will tell you about two of them.
Last year the 500 year anniversary of the first book printed in Sweden was celebrated. This focused national attention

on the art of printing and on books, literature, reading and of course on libraries. Many activities were supported by the government, e.g., 'The authors' train' project and the public library campaign 'The library is fantastic'.

The authors' train as well as the library campaign started in Stockholm on Sunday the 9th of October at the Central station of Stockholm. The whole station was then changed into the literary centre of Stockholm with appearances of authors, children's theatre and book lending. The books could be returned at any library in the country. There were a mobile library outside the station and a youth orchestra from the music school. We had the public address-system of the station at our disposal, and interspersed among the information about the trains you could hear small poems or mottos like 'Trains are often late but it's never too late with a book'. The papers and TV were of course on the spot.

At about 5 p.m. 'The authors' train' departed. The authors had rented two railway-cars which had been coupled up to the regular train. In all there were some hundred authors who went round to about thirty towns and visited libraries, places of work and schools. Their message was to stimulate responsible authorities to provide better school libraries and more libraries at places of work. Librarians went by the train and lent books to the travellers. I myself came along on the first section of the tour and it was a fantastic experience to lend books in the train to happy and surprised passengers.

The campaign 'The library is fantastic' lasted a week and the libraries were very ingenious when it came to hitting upon ideas to inform of the library.

The campaign turned out very well. Almost all the central libraries (we have 284 municipalities with one library system each) answered an inquiry and of these 72% could register more visitors compared to an ordinary October week, 53% of the libraries had increased their lending

and 46% booked new borrowers. In fact most libraries want campaigns both this year and next year. It will above all deal with the information and reference function. In this respect we also hope to be able to co-operate with the research libraries.
But beside the rather smooth campaign information it may perhaps also be interesting to enter deeply into two spheres which are of immediate interest in Sweden when it comes to spreading the information on books and libraries, namely the co-operation between library and school and the library activities at the places of work.

THE BOOK, THE CHILDREN, THE LIBRARIES IN SWEDEN

The ability to read has a long tradition in Sweden. As early as the 17th century there was in every family at least one who could read. Through what were called parish catechetical meetings for which the Church and the clergyman were responsible and at which each individual's capability of reading was tested, we soon got a high degree of proficiency in reading in our country.
Eventually school took over the responsibility for the ability to read but that ability and the amelioration of it is with us not only up to school. That ability belongs to the form of democracy we have created and the prosperity we have achieved. To be able to participate in public discussions people must have a good command of their language. Those who are able to read can by themselves acquire knowledge and information and do hereby not allow themselves to be manipulated.
In order to develop the trade and industry on which we are building our prosperity we as a small nation must see to it that we have a well-educated population. Sweden spends much money on education in proportion to its population.

In spite of this early ability to read and this great concentration on the school system there are animated discussions going on since about a decade regarding the deficient ability to read characteristic of many children leaving the 9-year compulsory comprehensive school. About 95% of all children pass today through the integrated upper secondary school. Some of these do not read as well as Swedish trade demands. We speak today in Sweden of functional illiterates where the word 'illiteracy' has another meaning than the one generally accepted. The functional illiterates in Sweden can decipher a text but they have not got literacy enough to enable them to get along in a technically advanced, highly industrialized country like ours.

To come in for one's share in that society, to be able to orientate oneself and take in the whole situation and also influence it one must have a very high degree of literacy. If one has not got it one may become a functional illiterate in our country, even if one can read tolerably well.

We are strangely enough in the position that, despite an abundant publication of books, an incredible lot of teaching material at school, an educational system which involves per capita the highest costs in the world, and a well developed public library system, we must start campaigns for the book, the reading and the libraries.

It has been believed for a long time that ability to read and industrialization have always walked hand in hand, that the ability to read increased automatically when industrialization increased. But we have seen a tendency that these lines of development begin to come apart at a certain stage. If we want as many people as possible to join us in the building of society we must see to it that every generation attains ability to read and by that masters its language.

The reading ability of a nation rests with the collective but must be won again and again by each individual.

There are a great many explanations of the problems I have outlined and time does not allow me to enter upon them all, but I have to mention a few. One problem is of course our small speech area. There are only about 8 million people speaking Swedish, so we have to learn at school the universal languages English, German and French. And that implies that there will be less time for our mother tongue.

Another problem is that school in our society which is distinguished by an enormous offering of different media has lost its position as principal intermediary to children and young people of knowledge, information and attitudes. The children get their information about the world and life from a lot of different media outside school which vie for their attention and time. When the abundance of information becomes too great there will be a lack of attention at the same time. Different media vie for viewers, listeners, readers. The messages are simplified, made more incisive and polarized. Through all these media the children get more and more fragmented pictures of the world, pictures full of contradictory valuations which are superficial and stereotyped in order to suit the public at large.

Around these problems a debate is carried on which contributes to an increased interest in children's reading habits and the position of literature at school. All over the country courses and conferences on reading pedagogy and books for children and young people are arranged. At the universities courses about literature for children and young people are constantly subscribed in full by teachers and librarians who want to get further education in this field.

In this work unite school, library and authors. Above all, Swedish authors of books for children and young people have engaged in the work and taken on a pedagogical role unusual for this occupational group. They permanently visit schools telling about their authorship, reading from their books and stimulating the children to reading on their own. In the authors' train last year there were a lot of authors of books for children and young people and they visited schools and libraries along the road. This autumn the Association of Swedish Authors will send out about 40 authors of books for children and young people by bus to make a nation-wide tour for propaganda purposes. They will visit schools talking to the children in the class-rooms about books, they will also arrange cabarets in the assembly halls of the schools during school hours. Local politicians will be invited to these performances to initiate discussions on resources for the school libraries and on the position of literature in the schoolwork.

In many places teachers have discovered what a stimulating measure it can be to introduce to the children the person behind the production, the author - thus enhancing their interest in reading. Today intense work is going on regarding fiction written by authors of books for children and young people, and a great number of new teaching methods are being developed to give the children a personal relationship to these texts. It has gone so far that authors and publishers have been forced to damp a little the enthusiasm of the children who are now trying to get in touch by letter with their favourite authors. Astrid Lindgren's publishing firm makes the following appeal: "Astrid Lindgren must have peace and quiet if she is to have time to write new books for you. If she is supposed to answer personnally all the questions you are writing to her about her books and her authorship all her time will pass in writing letters to you. Go to the library

and read all that is written about her and her books before you write directly to her. Otherwise there will be no more 'Pippi Longstocking' or 'Brother Lionheart'."

The authors of books for children and young people have consequently assumed a new role with enthusiasm and ingenuity by instructing young people how to read. So have Swedish children's librarians.

At the turn of the century the children's libraries in Sweden were separated from the school libraries, but not until the last decades the activities of children's libraries have been given priority to those of other libraries. Posts like children's librarians have doubled during the last 15 years. The cause for this interest in the activities of children's libraries is of course the concern about the children's ability to read and the position of literature at school. The children's librarians' knowledge of children's literature and children's reading references has become invaluable in the work concerning reading pedagogy.

The children's librarians who still are only about 300 in number out of about 2800 in all have changed the character of their profession and their working methods.

It has been established that it has not sufficed to buy, organize and expose books in the libraries to make children read. The book is an unobtrusive medium and therefore has to be opened and introduced to children in our society which is flooded by more loudvoiced media like TV and audio-cassettes. In collaboration with pre-school and school children's librarians have acted as book introducers and reading promoters and visited schools and class-rooms and spoken about books. But not only children have been the target group of the children's librarians. The increased interest in children's reading and the literature for children and young people has led to teachers becoming a more and more important target group in the work of the children's librarians. If the teacher is to

put the right book in the hands of the right child he should be informed about the child's ability to read and its interests. He must also know what children's books are produced in the country. Nearly 1000 titles a year are published in Sweden if reprints and translations are included, and it takes time to orientate oneself and penetrate into that flood of books. The children's librarian has to a high degree exactly the knowledge which the teacher should need to find that right book for the pupil of whom he has a thorough knowledge. So intensive work is going on to find ways to a closer collaboration between school and library.

This collaboration manifests itself in different ways. The children's librarian can visit classes continuously and tell the pupils about books and writers. The librarians can take the initiative in creating teachers' study days or study circles on literature for children and young people intended for teachers. You might say that the librarians in this connection have taken a certain responsibility for the in-service training of the teachers.

In the report which we have got this spring from the above-mentioned public library commission which has been working for 4 years on government directives for the activities of the public libraries, the only new government money for the activities of the libraries has been allotted to that same collaboration between library and school.

## LIBRARIES AT PLACES OF WORK

What methods, then, should we use to reach adults? Many of the methods applied to children can also be applied to adults. How is the ability to read among them? The investigation of the position of the book in Sweden has shown that about 2 million Swedes between 16 and 74 seldom or never read a book, that is every fourth grown-up Swede. One of the steps that has produced good results when it comes to reaching adults not accustomed to reading is

library activities at places of work. The introduction of libraries at places of work has been one of the most noticeable efforts to encourage reading among adults during the last few years. Since 1975 such libraries have been set up by means of State subsidies and more than 110 municipalities have nowadays library activities at places of work, in the first place industries.

The libraries at places of work can be described as a sort of decentralized communal extension service which presupposes collaboration between the public library, the trade-union organizations and the company management. This library service consists of a rather small number of books which are easily accessible and can be borrowed free of cost by means of an informal loan system based on trust. The books are put on a revolving book-rack, a book-case or a book table, as a rule close to the staff dining-room or resting-room of the enterprise or some other strategically chosen place where people pass. In some cases the book lending takes place out on the workshop floor. Among the books are both fiction and non-fiction, children's books and books in foreign languages. At certain places there are also a small selection of newspapers, periodicals and encyclopedias. Exhibitions and other programme activities occur. The librarian can co-operate with the trade-union organizations and together with them produce an exhibition about for instance the history of the enterprise. A librarian visits the place of work every or every second week.

At present there are 525 libraries at places of work in Sweden. Most of them are located in industries, primarily the heavy manufacturing industry, after that the wood and paper industry.

Experience shows that libraries at places of work are of great significance for the increase of reading. These libraries have a greater percentage of borrowers among the employees than have the public libraries among the

grown-up population. Not only the book and reading habits are influenced with those who already are book readers. Also those not used to reading get inspired above all by their fellow-workers. Many thought that the libraries at places of work would be a way of tempting people to visit public libraries. However, "books at the job" (as we call the libraries at places of work) have not achieved that effect - people content themselves with the books at the places of work. At present animated discussions are going on in Sweden how fast the "books at the job" should expand and how it is to be financed. Municipalities have limited means. The pressure is great from trade-union organizations and from political quarters. The question is: how much should and can the State invest and how great ought the ambition to be? Shall we have books at all places of work of more than 200 employees within 50 years? Can the company managements step in and sponsor the activity and do the libraries want that? There are many unsolved and controversial questions which must be brought to a speedy solution.

TO SUM UP

In order to reach new and inexperienced readers we must accordingly go outside the premises of the libraries to a greater extent than we do now with hospital libraries, mobile libraries, book delivery service etc. We must work with unconventional methods, change our attitudes and behaviour. That means too that we must at the same time improve our professional skill at the libraries so that we may not only help people find their way to the library but also help them find their way in the library and preferably stimulate them to find their way back again. For all this we need imagination and ideas, we need many collaborators and support from radio, TV and mass media. And imagine what support we would get if UNESCO could soon proclaim the Year of the public library.

That would really be of great help to public libraries in many countries, heighten their status, help them become visible to people and show that the library is fantastic.

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Margareta Torngren

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Section: Children's Libraries

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# PROMOTING CHILDREN'S LIBRARY WORK AND READING HABITS IN AFRICA

by

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Freetown, Sierra Leone

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# PROMOTING CHILDREN'S LIBRARY WORK AND READING HABITS IN AFRICA

## INTRODUCTION

I feel honoured to have been asked to present this paper on Promoting Children's Library Work and Reading Habits in Africa and I wish to thank the IFLA Sections on Children's Libraries and Public Libraries for this opportunity to do so. I am especially grateful to the parent body of IFLA for the interest it has shown in Librarianship in the developing countries particularly countries in Africa. Indeed the advancement of Librarianship in Third World Countries has been identified as one of IFLA's priority programmes. Of the 9 (nine) project proposals in IFLA's Regional Development Programme for 1981/83 to be funded by CIDA, 6 (six) were for projects in Africa - Home Libraries in Zimbabwe; the Development of Reading in Senegal; Clearinghouse and Training Centre for Library Statistics in Africa; A Basic School Library for Blind Children in Sierra Leone and the provision of Travel costs for persons from Developing Countries who have had little or no exposure to International contacts, (I have been one of the fortunate librarians from a Third World country whom IFLA has enabled to get some international visibility) and immediately following this 50th IFLA Council and General Conference, the IFLA/UNESCO Seminar for African Librarians on Universal Availability of Publications will be held here in Nairobi.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be here today and to be able to participate in the various activities of IFLA.
I do sincerely hope that future IFLA meetings will see greater participation of Librarians from Third World countries especially developing countries in Africa.

"It is in early life that a taste for books and the habit of using libraries and their resources are most easily acquired.
The public library has therefore a particular duty to provide the opportunity for the informal and individual choice of books and other materials by children. Special collections and if possible, separate areas should be provided for them. The children's library can then become a lively stimulating place in which activities of various kinds will be a source of cultural inspiration." UNESCO Public Library Manifesto.

Children's Libraries in Africa use methods and forms of activity which are well-known and widespread in countries throughout the world. All children - whatever their race, colour or creed - love a good story and folk-tales are universally popular. Regular story hours, talks on books, quiz games, gramophone records, film shows, slide shows, puppet shows etc. are all in varying degrees to attract young readers to the library. Non-book materials are widely used in children's libraries all over the world and, given funds for the purchase of the equipment - and subject also to the availability of adequate accommodation - such materials can also be used in children's libraries in Africa where the percentage illiterate children is very high. The majority of the children live in rural areas

where books and libraries are practically non-existent. Some of these children have never seen or handled a book in their lives, as their parents are also illiterate.

I mentioned that children's libraries in Africa use methods and forms of activity which are well known in children's libraries all over the world. Sadly, there are some children's libraries which are aware of all these methods and activities but cannot use them because - as you all know - these activities call for books, adequate buildings and adequate staff who are trained to work with children. Many children's libraries in Africa are practically starved of all three prerequisites. We do not only need trained professional staff: the professional training needed must go beyond the traditional disciplines of librarianship and its techniques into related areas of child psychology, reading skills and educational theory.

## THE LIBRARY SITUATION IN MOST OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN AFRICA

The Library situation in most of the developing countries in Africa and the problems which hamper satisfactory promotion of children's library work and the reading habit in Africa are common to all these countries, therefore much of what I have to say will be of general application but with particular reference to Sierra Leone.

The Children's Library at the Central Library of the Sierra Leone Library Board in Freetown caters for the child community ranging from ages 5 (five) to 15 (fifteen) years, although allowance is made for the pre-school child who can make use of the library facilities.

The library is open from 9.00am to 5.30pm on Mondays to Fridays inclusive, and from 9.00am to 1.00pm on Saturdays and it is closed on Sundays and all public holidays. Membership is free and children may become members of the library when an application form is signed by the child and endorsed either by the teacher or parent of the child; when the completed form is returned a membership ticket is then issued. Initially, every new member is allowed only one book and subsequently, members who can read very well and who are considered fast readers are allowed two or more books.

The books provided in the children's library vary considerably and are provided to suit children of all ages. The stock is arranged according to categories e.g. Easy Readers for Children within the ages of five to seven years; Junior Fiction for children ages eight to ten years and intermediate fiction for older children. The library also has a stock of

reference works which are frequently consulted by the children seeking information for assignment purposes or for general knowledge.

Periodicals also form part of the stock. Although supplies are irregular and most of the periodicals are out of date they do make interesting and informative reading for the children; Look and Learn, Knowledge and The Sciences are very popular and very much in demand.

WHAT DO CHILDREN IN SIERRA LEONE READ

Many children in Freetown and a few in the Regional Headquarter towns read almost anything. They are very catholic in their tastes but a readership survey which was recently conducted by the children's library has been very useful in identifying what children read and what they would like to read and whether the library is providing a satisfactory service.

A random sample was carried out by an issue of one hundred (100) questionnaires to users in the department to identify several trends in the children's reading habits.

According to the respondents, boys within the ages of ten to fifteen years do exhibit a variety in their choice of reading matter. Although about 51% of the boys particularly like books written by Enid Blyton, yet an equally high percentage of boys do prefer reading books by other authors like Richmal Crompton, Michael Hardcastle, Clifford Fyle (Sierra Leonean), Thomas Decker (Sierra Leonean), Willard Price, Captain W.E. Johns - The Biggies series and general knowledge books especially on space, travel and

general science are equally popular. The Hardy Boys Series and the Nancy Drew Series in the fiction collection are extremely popular and are never on the shelves as they are always out on loan.

It was found out from the respondents that about 80% of the girls within the same age range preferred books by Enid Blyton. The reading interests of the girls are quite restricted. Some girls however do prefer reading folk tales especially tales re-told by Manning Sanders and Andrew Lang, Tales of the Forest by Thomas Decker and the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys fiction series.

This survey also revealed that very young children, that is children between ages of five (5) to nine (9) years do not actually know what they had read or what they would like to read. Some of them it was discovered do like to read books by Brian Wildsmith, Dick Bruna and Paul Galdone because such books have large print and simple bold illustrations which can give much delight to children.

Another deduction made from this survey is that about 90% of the girls are satisfied with the service, whereas only about 60% of the boys stated that they were satisfied. Although the percentage of boys who found the service good is high, the 40% of boys and about 10% girls who are dissatisfied with the service cannot be easily ignored. It was however evident that the reasons for their dissatisfaction are mainly due to the lack of reading materials that they would like to find in the library and also because they would prefer to take out more than two books at a time for home reading. The library has had to limit the number of books

that can be borrowed because the bookstock of the children's library is very inadequate. There is a dearth of children's books in Sierra Leone. Measures have already been adopted to change this restricted policy and currently, children who are known to be 'fast' and 'good' readers are allowed more than the prescribed number of books.

Apart from the provision of books, the children's library also provides other facilities which are often referred to as extension activities. There is no doubt that extension work with children can be very rewarding and can do much to stimulate interest in the library. The purpose of these activities is to provide much scope for advising and guiding children in their reading. These activities include film shows, story telling sessions, book exhibitions, library club activities, puppet shows, art competitions and inter-school quiz competitions. An interschool quiz competition was organised in May - June 1984 and book prizes plus certificates were given to the winners and runners-up. All the other children who took part in the competition were also given certificates. 80 (eighty) children from 20 (twenty) schools participated in the competition.

In 1986 the Peace Corps Volunteer who was in charge of the Primary Schools Service organised a series of puppet shows for the children. This went down very well as many of the children had never seen a puppet show before. The puppet show was part of the activities the Sierra Leone Library Board had organised for its first National Book Week which was held from 16th-23rd May 1986. The purpose of the National Book Week was to further

advertise the libraries operated by the Board, to stimulate the reading habit of the public and the acquire new members. Full use was made of the press and radio, and posters and hand-outs were circulated throughout the country. All the schools and other educational institutions throughout the country participated in the programme. The week was launched by a broadcast talk given by the Chief Education Officer, and this was followed on the next day by another mainly for school children, given by the Officer-in-charge of the schools broadcast programme at the Ministry of Education. There were various exhibitions of special collections of books, maps and old prints. There were also debates and other literary activities, and the response of the public was very encouraging indeed. The aim of the project was achieved in that 3,170 new members were enrolled during the month and 24,271 books were issued for home reading. Freetown, Bonthe, Kallahun, Makeni and Mattru established new all-time records for issues during the month of May and this was followed by an issue of 21,739 for the month of June.

Special features among the exhibitions were the following: Library services in Sierra Leone; Africana; Books by Sierra Leonean authors; Books about Sierra Leone in the 18th and 19th centuries; A collection of Russian literature (in English); Vernacular books; New acquisitions; Books and periodicals for teachers (on loan from the British Council) and Books by Fourah Bay College Faculty Members (on loan from Fourah Bay College).

## BOOK EXHIBITIONS

Children's books exhibitions and displays have become regular features in the children's library and since 1979 the International Year of the Child (IYC) an exhibition of children's books has been mounted annually in the children's library.

To mark the International Year of the Child the Library mounted an exhibition of books which included folktales from many countries around the world, children's books by local authors and children's books from various countries of the British Commonwealth, from Europe and the United States of America, the USSR and other countries. Books from the Margaret Scoggin Memorial Collection were also included in the exhibition. The exhibition was widely publicized by the local press, Radio and Television and it attracted large numbers of children and adults. The exhibition was formally opened by the President of the Sierra Leone Writers' Club Mrs. T.A. Lucan who stressed the need for publishing houses in Sierra Leone.

The especial value of the IYC book exhibition was the awareness of the need for the development of an indigenous book industry particularly children's books which the Sierra Leone Library Board hoped such an exhibition would engender in the minds of the public.

In April 1982 an exhibition of children's books was mounted to mark International Children's Book Day. The exhibition highlighted the works of the famous Danish story teller Hans Christian Andersen. Also on display was the book which won the 1982 NOMA AWARD for publishing in

Africa - The Brasaman's Secret by the Ghanaian author Meshack Asare. In March 1983 some children's books by Commonwealth Writers were included in an exhibition of Commonwealth Literature which was mounted to mark Commonwealth Day 1983.

To mark International Children's Book Day 1984, the Sierra Leone Library Board mounted an exhibition of Children's Books in the Children's Library from Monday 2nd April 1984 - Saturday 7th April 1984. Included in the exhibition were folk tales by Hans Christian Andersen, folk tales from around the world and children's books by authors who had won the Hans Christian Andersen Medals, the Caldecott and Newbery Awards, the Kate Greenaway and Carnegie Medals for writing and illustrating children's books. Also in the display were a small collection of children's books by Sierra Leonean authors.

Included also in the exhibition were books from the Margaret Scoggin Memorial Collection which are housed in the children's Library. The Margaret Scoggin Memorial Collection are books of International interest published in the United States of America and are presented in honor of Margaret Scoggin, Coordinator of Young Adult Services of the New York Public Library, 1952-'67, international authority on books for young people and consultant for the establishment of the International Youth Library in Munich. The Scoggin Memorial Collection is a project of the United States section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). Books are selected by the Children's Services Division of the American Library Association, and are presented by the Children's Book Council, a non-profit association of American book publishers. It is indeed gratifying to note that the book

Singing Tales of Africa by a Sierra Leonean Adjai Robinson is included in this Collection.

SEMINAR

The Sierra Leone Library Board in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Association of Writers and Illustrators, The Sierra Leone Library Association and the Sierra Leone Booksellers Association organised a UNESCO-sponsored Seminar on the theme CREATIVE WRITING and PUBLISHING FOR CHILDREN IN AFRICA TODAY. The seminar which was hosted by the Sierra Leone Library Board at the Central Library in Freetown from 12th-14th January 1983 brought into focus the various problems and issues affecting children's book publishing and the ways of solving them. The keynote address on the topic WRITING RIGHTS and WRONGS fo our CHILDREN was given by the Nigerian writer and Secretary-General of the Nigerian Writers' Association Dr. Kole Omotoso. The seminar was well-attended throughout and attracted speakers from Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom.

The Junior Library Club also forms part of our Extension Programmes. This club requires children to work in groups so that they can learn from each other and acquire the spirit of co-operation and enjoy the fruits of co-operate endeavour.

The members of this club were actually invited to form this group because they were good readers. However, the programmes organised by members of this club are not only geared towards books and reading but toward other educational programmes which would help to stimulate

the mental faculty of the child. Activities such as the making of Christmas cards, flags of different Commonwealth countries to mark Commonwealth Day, Stamp collecting etc. have been organised from time to time.

The publication of the Junior Library magazine is another form of our extension programme. Pupils from primary schools and the lower forms of secondary schools are invited to submit magazine articles and the response is always good. Although not all articles will be published, an exercise of this nature will help children to develop creative writing skills either in the form of jokes, puzzles, poetry or short stories.

The telling of stories to children do have a similar purpose. It is one of the oldest forms of extension programmes organised by the children's library. There has however been a falling off in popularity among the older children. However, story telling still ranks very high in order of priority.

Guest story tellers are sometimes invited to tell stories to the children and the 1982 NOMA AWARD Winning author the Ghanaian Nashack Asare read the story of his book The Brassman's Secret to the children and explained the significance of the illustrations depicting the Ashanti gold weights. Dr. Adjai Robinson, a Sierra Leonean writer presently lecturing at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Nigeria and author of the book SINGING TALES OF AFRICA has also told some of his stories to the children in the library. Many of the children enjoy stories with an African setting especially stories about the exploits of African heroes and heroines and African animal folktales.

Film shows attract the largest number of children and because of the lack of space we regretfully have had to turn away some children. Most of the films are educational feature films which we borrow from the British Council, from some of the Embassies in Sierra Leone and from the Sierra Leone Television Film Library.

The liaison between the schools and the library has been quite passive. Although most of the programmes organised by the library involves school children, yet perhaps the most crucial, that is "class visits" to the library has been quite limited. This is due mainly to limitation of staff and lack of space. We however hope that very soon more class visits would be organised as part of the library's extension programmes.

The Children's Library also tries to reach out to children in the Community who are prevented from using the library because of their disabilities. One Saturday in 1981 which was declared the International Year of the Disabled the Library brought the children from the Blind School and the Cheshire Home to the library and the blind children gave demonstrations on the use of braille, performed a play and sang several songs. They were accompanied on the piano by the Headmaster Mr. Sam Campbell who is also blind, and by Joe, one of the first pupils of the Blind School and who now teaches at the school also played the piano and the drums. The physically handicapped children from the Cheshire Home enjoyed the performances.

## FUTURE PLANS

In the years that lie ahead, given the necessary funds, equipment, staff and books the Sierra Leone Library Board intend to intensify our efforts to promote the habit by organising various activities which will include Book Fairs, National Book Weeks, Book reviews etc. The children's library also hopes to start a long vacation reading club and certificates will be awarded to the children who read the largest number of books.

The Sierra Leone Library Board will also revive the art of story-telling and encourage authors to prepare collections of texts drawn from interviews or tape-recordings and in order to stimulate writing for children by Sierra Leoneans. The Sierra Leone Library Board would also encourage creative activities of writers and artists, translators and adapters by organizing literary and art competitions at national and regional levels to discover new talent; and the Board will either establish local literary prizes or ensure that local authors and artists be given national recognition for their works.

This paper will not be complete if mention is not made of the problems which the Sierra Leone Library Board in particular is encountering in the promotion of library work and the reading habit in Africa.

## GENERAL PROBLEMS

Shortage of funds and unavailability of foreign exchange have had a devasting impact on the Board's Library services in the entire country. A reader has a very slim chance of finding a fairly recent publication

in any of the Board's Libraries.

Lack of resources books, adequate buildings, staff, transport and equipment to carry out the libraries' appointed tasks have resulted in shallow service. The Central Children's Library in Freetown which until January 1980 when the small Kissy Branch Library was opened was the only library serving a child population of 112,000 has for a long time been too small for the services it should provide. The room is only 126 square metres. Professor Saunders in his report on an Advisory visit to Sierra Leone 15th-30th March 1974 stated that: "It is clear to me that Sierra Leone Libraries are so starved of books, trained staff and adequate accommodation that they are perilously near breaking point; in particular is this true of the school libraries and the up-country sector of the public library service..."

In his comments on the Public Library Service he also stated that "The great and urgent need for public library services, particularly up-country is being severely handicapped by lack of resources; and not least, resources of staff. Staff memebers I spoke to seem very keen and highly motivated, but opportunities for training seem to be almost completely lacking. Even at the present level of operation there is clearly need for training quite a significant number of middle-level staff; when resources are made available to give the nation the public library service it needs and deserves, the demand for middle-level training should become very substantial indeed."

STAFF

The lack of adequate professional staff and trained support staff in the children's library and the Primary Schools Service department to work with children, parents and teachers to ensure that the best use is made of the best use is made of the resources available, continues to be the major gap in children's library work and the promotion of the reading habit.

Compared with some of the other African countries, Sierra Leone has a long way to go in the provision of well-organised Library services for children. The Sierra Leone Library Board has not always had a professional children's librarian. This is a problem, for high quality staff are essential in creating an efficient service. Ghana and some states in Nigeria have excellent children's libraries because they have the professionally staff - trained children's librarians who are aware that library service for children is a cornerstone of the public library system, that the experience children have with librarians can influence their attitudes towards libraries, education and educational materials in general, as well as their personal development, particularly their self-esteem. These fortunate countries realise that a person entering this field must respect children as complete persons, must enjoy and must be a person with imagination and creativity. Children will not be attracted to a library with staff whose idea of children's library work is only the lending service centred around the issue desk.

This children's library also lacks some basic library equipment like cassette players, Tape/Slide Projectors, films, gramophone records, furniture - tables and chairs, Kinder boxes, book trolleys and there is dearth of new books because of the foreign exchange problem. The illiteracy rate in Sierra Leone is very high and is estimated at about 85 percent. The World Bank World Atlas of the Child produced for the International Year of the Child contains some alarming statistics. It states that by the year 2000 it is estimated that the number of children in Africa will increase by 72 percent. In my view this will naturally increase the percentage of illiteracy in Africa and aggravate another problem for libraries in Africa i.e. Readership; with such a high percentage of illiteracy where do we find the readers? The majority of the children and their parents especially these in the rural areas have little or no education or are completely illiterate in English as well as the indigenous languages.

Libraries are not important to these people: to those who cannot read, libraries hold little attraction. There is also the problem of wastage. A large number of children leave primary school without sufficient skills and knowledge, and because of the poor education facilities - lack of schools, overcrowded classes, inadequate teacher training, etc. - millions of children never gain sufficient reading skills to prevent them from lapsing into illiteracy. I believe that public libraries in Africa should play a vital role in the eradication of illiteracy by stocking their shelves with books for new literates and children in rural and urban areas - books relevant to the readers' needs and experiences. But how can the libraries provide these books when they are not available or when few or no books are published in the local

languages or in simple English which children and new literates can read and understand? In Sierra Leone, for example, none of the vernacular languages are taught in the schools and colleges, and the majority who speak these vernacular languages cannot read the few pamphlets and other materials written in these languages. Ghana and Nigeria fare better because in Nigeria the three major languages Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa - are widely used, and in East Africa Swahili is widely used as a second language. In Ghana I believe Fante and Twi are also widely used.

This brings us now to the other problem relating to books - the provision of books in the mother tongue or the local languages. Public libraries are urged to stock books in the local languages, but there is a dearth of these books in our developing countries. Local children's authors and illustrators are few and in any case English or French is the lingua franca in most of these countries. There is a case for the widespread use of vernacular languages for literature, but a lot of research must still be done, which leads us to the next problem - Publishing and the Book Industry in developing African countries.

Much has been written on the problem of book development in African countries. African countries are dependent on European languages - primarily English and French - for education, commerce, administration and intellectual communication. There are many factors inhibiting local book production - strong oral traditions, scarcity of skilled book industry personnel, shortage of well-equipped modern printing establishments and the multiplicity of local languages. Nigeria is estimated to have

between 350 and 400 languages shared by more than 100 ethnic linguistic groups, Ghana 56 languages and dialects and Sierra Leone, with a population of 3.9 million, is saddled with 18 languages and dialects. African countries are faced with the difficulty of printing and publishing in a multiplicity of local languages.

In the light of these problems, African countries have - and, I am afraid, will continue - to depend for a long time on multinational publishers whose output, because of commercial pressures, naturally reflects the needs and the social and cultural background of Europe and America. They have not invested heavily in literacy follow-up material or books for the young in Africa, even though these are vital in widening the reading habit, in increasing the size of the book market and fostering widespread development. The multinational publishers have neglected literacy and young people's materials because small readerships and linguistic fragmentation mean short print-runs and profits suffer because the purchasing power of the potential reader is low or absent.

Another problem caused by the lack of indigenous publishers and good bookshops is that librarians have to depend upon overseas publishers' catalogues and other bibliographical aids in the selection of books. These catalogues naturally list some books that are not really appropriate for libraries in developing countries, even those where English is spoken. The kind of books that would make a real impact in African countries where the child is in the process of learning a new language like English would be books written in simple English against

a familiar background and with local illustrations. These books should be written by competent African authors to ensure a wider reading public.

The Sierra Leone Library Board operates a Primary Schools service for children and teachers. The main concern of this service is the provision of books for primary schools in the small towns and villages in the rural areas where public branch libraries have not been established. The books are taken to the schools by the mobile library vans and deposited with the Headteachers. The schools are usually visited once a year but for sometime now because of the lack of books, bad roads and quite recently shortage of petrol, the service had to be suspended and in 1982 only one trek was undertaken. There are about 860 schools on the list of schools to be serviced but some schools have not been visited for the last five years.

The following statistics will give an idea of how starved the Primary School service of the Sierra Leone Library Board is of Children's books.

| Date | District | No. of schools visited | No. of pupils on roll | No. of books deposited |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nov. 1982 | Bo | 36 | 9,056 | 1,685 |
| Feb. 1984 | PortLoko | 38 | 11,305 | 2,110 |
| March 1984 | Moyamba | 45 | 11,820 | 2,020 |
| May 1984 | Pujehun | 8 | 1,673 | 465 |

## INADEQUATE PROVISION OF BOOKS

Some of the books shelves in the children's library are very bare. There is a high rate of discards in the area of children's books. The home backgrounds and living conditions of the majority of the children are poor and the children are not taught how to care for books. After four or five issues in some extreme cases, library books are no longer fit to be put on the shelves. Some parents have actually forbidden their children to use our library because of the condition of the books, the general unattractiveness of the library and the paucity of the services provided for the children.

Because the majority of the children live far away from the libraries, we could copy the example of Sunderland Public Libraries (U.K.). In 1978 they organised a special project for children under the Urban Aid scheme, "Read about 78". It was designed to introduce children to books, maintain reading habits during the holiday break and give them access to books in areas without libraries. The mobile unit was staffed by four storytellers and activities included story-sessions, craft-work, drama, games, music and general book-based activities. Approximately 1660 children were reached as the "Readabout" van covered 1221 miles; 55 sessions were held in 25 different places. 155 stories were told and almost 900 books were borrowed.

The use of mobile libraries will go a long way to solving the problem of distances so prevalent in Africa countries.
Children find it difficult to visit the libraries as often as they would wish to. We must therefore take the library to them.

Lack of funds, buildings and equipment also make it difficult to establish a network of children's libraries - as Ghana has done, in various sections of the capital cities and at the district and village level. We must therefore take the books to the children wherever it is possible to have deposit collections of books - children's hospitals and institutions for handicapped children, e.g. schools for the Blind. In Sierra Leone the Milton Margai School for the Blind finds simple stories and folk-tales useful. These stories are translated into braille by the teachers in the school as it is very difficult to get suitable children's books in braille.

As Lester Asheim has rightly stated in his book Librarianship in the Developing Countries. "... the problem of a reading audience is not strictly a matter of illiteracy. Obviously there can be no readers even when the ability exists, if there is nothing to read". The dearth of books continues to be a major handicap in the promotion of library services to children in Africa and the encouragement of the reading habit among them. As S.A. Amu Djoleto has graphically stated the problem "If books are water, Africa today is in some drought. The strong beginnings that have been made in African book publishing and book use are far from watering the thirsty land of readership." Local Publishing is practically non-existent. Sierra Leone imports about 99.9% of the books used in the country and with the escalating costs, books are no longer cheap. Foreign exchange is difficult to obtain and this further compounds the problem. The Sierra Leone Library is owing its United Kingdom Book Suppliers nearly £8,000 (Eight Thousand Pounds Sterling) for books which have been supplied, some of them since 1981 and since

then it has not been able to order books from overseas. Fortunately the Overseas Development Administration of Great Britain through the British Council in Sierra Leone has continued to make its annual presentations of children's books for the Board's children's libraries and the Primary Schools Service. In 1982 the Sierra Leone Library Board also received funds from the Dutch Centre for Public Libraries and Literature (NBLC) in the Hague to purchase books for the Primary Schools Service and the Ranfurly Library Service of Great Britain has over the years been sending regular consignments of tea-chests of second hand children's books which have been added to the book stock of the children's library and that of the Primary Schools Service. We have also recently received some consignments of well produced children's books from the Overseas Book Centre in Canada and these have been most welcome additions to the book stock of the children's library especially the classics by Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, Lewis Carroll, Jules Verne, Louisa May Alcott, R.M. Ballantyne etc. Small donations of children's books are also received from the Embassies of the USSR, the Peoples Republic of China, the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, Evans Publishers and individual donors.

The Sierra Leone Library Board is extremely grateful for all these book donations but it must be said that there is still a need for books relevant to the needs of the majority of African children. Apart from those urban children who live in the capital cities, some of who have been exposed to western ideas and influences, ordinary African children especially those in the rural areas, have great difficulty in understanding

books written by foreign authors. The style and subject matter of the texts are almost incomprehensible to them and the stories have no meaning because their background and language are unfamiliar. Having said this, I would like to state that children's books which are regarded as classics of world literature have great appeal and should therefore be a part of every child's reading history and we do provide these books in our libraries. African children should be provided with a wide variety of books for recreational and voluntary reading, and according to the statement issued by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) to mark the International Year of the Child (IYC). Children should read. "... Books of fantasy to stretch their imaginations to lead them to heights of artistic creativity or scientific exploration not dreamed of before. Books to promote friendship, peace and understanding; books that introduce people who have other ways of living; books that present a variety of ethnic groups and cultures in a positive and non-stereotyped manner; books that prepare children for living harmoniously in an inter-dependent world; books to tell them of their own ethnic heritage; history, myth, legend and folklore; books written by persons intimately involved in their particular culture to foster their ethnic pride and give them a sense of personal identity; books that, while recognising the value of cultural differences, yet emphasize the many things shared by all human kind; books that tell of human rights; books that foster concern for the earth; the single planet on which we all live together...."

Yes, as Paul Hazard has so aptly put it "children's books keep alive a sense of nationality but they also keep alive a sense of humanity. They describe their native land lovingly, but they also describe faraway

lands where unknown brothers live. They understand the essential quality of their own race; but each of them is a messenger that goes beyond mountains and rivers, beyond the seas, to the very ends of the world in search of new friendships." These are the kinds of books I believe will help to promote children's library work and reading habits in Africa. But we can only achieve this if we are given the necessary tools - books, buildings, equipment and staff. We cannot always depend on aid. As T.M. Yusufu stated "International aid has been useful and will continue to be needed... Fellowships and Scholarships are useful in building up local expertise, but more emphasis should be given to developing and using local training facilities if necessary on a regional basis. Indeed there tends to be too great a reliance on foreign aid and loans, and too little regional cooperation...
In the final analysis however, and should be seen and given for what it is or should be: namely assistance to fill gaps and promote ultimate self-reliance. It is not and should never be a substitute for self help."

Some developing countries in Africa have made rapid progress in the provision of libraries and in the development of the book industries inspite of the many problems although there are not as yet any publishers in Africa who exclusively cater for children, nevertheless countries like Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya have lively and enterprising local book industries. In East Africa the bulk of the children's book publishing output comes from Kenya.

In Ghana, though the publishing industries are beset by many problems the local book industry manages to survive and the Ghana Publishing Corporation has produced a substantial list of children's titles which include

Meshack Asare's picture story book Tawia goes to Sea published in 1970 which has gained world wide recognition and which has been translated into Japanese. The 3000 US Dollars prize the NOMA AWARD for publishing in Africa went to Meshack Asare for his children's book The Brassman's Secret. Nigeria has a fair number of publishing houses and in all the above mentioned countries there is a vigorous growth of indigenous writing.

Sierra Leone like many other African countries is also experiencing chronic balance of payments problems but there is no reason why some effort at producing children's books locally should not be made. New methods could be found to produce children's books at relatively little cost to serve local needs. Attractive yet simply-produced books and booklets have been published in some other countries of Africa e.g. The Gambia in West Africa.

The problem in many countries in Africa, Sierra Leone included some to be the absence of the political will. The climate in these countries is not propitious for libraries and the reading habit. If the local residents including the politicians, the members of Parliament in their respective constituencies, if these people are all motivated to see the need for reading voluntarily and therefore appreciate the importance of libraries or reading rooms or book centres, call them what you may, if these libraries are stocked with books, booklets, pamphlets on health, farming etc. religious tracts, political tracts, reading materials for new literates, newspapers etc. we would be well on the way towards promoting the reading habit in Africa because the adults would feel the need for libraries and would therefore encourage their children to read.

In some countries in Africa, libraries come under the Ministry of Education, some as in Kenya and in some states in Nigeria are under the Ministry of Culture and some under the Ministry of Information. African Librarians are well aware of the importance of children's libraries and they do realise that the reading habit is best inculcated when the child is young. Many African Librarians especially those from countries where there were no library schools were trained in Great Britain and the USA and they would like to provide adequate library services for children and promote the reading habit using similar methods and practices as obtained in these countries, as well as innovative methods which would respond to the needs of their local communities. But librarians in Africa unlike their counterparts in the developed countries have to depend upon the interest and commitment of their respective governments for funds for the provision of library services. Unfortunately in most cases libraries and librarianship are not top on the list of priorities in many African countries. Health, Education and Agriculture are regarded as priority areas and lip-service is only paid to the development of libraries even when they come under the Ministry of Education.

Therefore as Lester Asheim states:

"It is the Ministers of Education (and here we must add Ministers of Culture, Ministers of Information), the Chancellors of Universities, and the Directors of the budget who will determine in what direction libraries will go and how much support they will receive. Until they understand the function of the library as an educational institution until they recognise that organised information is a national resource, until they accept librarianship as a profession essential to the nations welfare, most of our effort will be wasted."

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Division: Libraries Serving the General Public
Section: Children's Libraries

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# Education and Training of Children's Librarians in Africa

by

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Division: Libraries Serving
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Section: Children's Libraries

# EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANS IN AFRICA

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As I was thinking over this topic, I kept coming back to a basic question: What do we mean by a children's librarian in the African context? Are we referring to a librarian who has special training and a career in children's librarianship? Or are we referring to any librarian, or indeed anyone, providing library service to children?

If we restrict our definition to the first group, those with special qualifications in children's librarianship, I fear we will find few individuals who fit our definition. There is little or no provision for specialization in children's librarianship in African library schools. Nor does one find many librarians who go into children's work for their entire career.

Who, then, are the children's librarians? I suggest we shift our focus to those actually providing library service to children. Who are these people and what education and training do they need to be more effective?

.../2.

## Library Service to Children in Africa

Let us begin by briefly surveying library service to children in Africa. While conditions vary from country to country, there are certain common patterns. Most countries have a public library service, which may be organized nationally, as in Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia, or on a state-wide basis, as in Nigeria. The service typically consists of a central library in the capital, regional and branch libraries in some other towns, and where possible, bookmobile service to rural centres and schools. Relatively few children have access to public library service because of the small number of libraries spread over large areas. Many regions have no public library, or only one or two poorly equipped ones at the centre. Although more branch libraries are being opened, the pattern of neighbourhood libraries set in each local community is far from being a reality. The lack of neighbourhood libraries increases the importance of extension services, such as book mobile service, book boxes, school visits and use of the mass media.

Library Service for children is also provided by school libraries, especially on the secondary school level. These libraries suffer from many inadequacies - in facilities, resources and staff - but are increasingly accepted as a necessary part of any school. In many countries, among them Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia and Tanzania, there are close links between the public library authority and school libraries.

.../3.

There is little evidence of the parallel services found in some more developed countries. Rather, the two have found various forms of networking beneficial to both. The public libraries can provide a centralized structure. They have a corps of professional librarians, who can provide guidance in setting up school libraries, assistance with selection and cataloguing, and training for school library personnel. The public libraries also have relatively larger collections, which can be shared with schools through long term loans and book mobile services. The schools, on the other hand, are located throughout both the cities and countryside and so offer access to the grassroots. The school is the child-based institution extending to the neighbourhood level. Teachers also form a potentially valuable human resource which could greatly extend library services for children.

Who Provides Library Service to Children?

Although it would be desirable to have children's services provided by professional librarians with specialized training, this will not be possible in the near future, except perhaps for a few individuals in leadership roles. So we must come back to the question: Who is actually providing library service to children?

In most African countries, there is a shortage of qualified librarians, although the inclination to make do with sub-professional staff may hide this fact. There is also a wide-spread belief that less qualified personnel are adequate for public library work. Librarians themselves prefer academic libraries because of the higher status, higher salaries and better conditions of service.

.../4.

Usually the optimal situation in a public library is for service to children to be provided by a generalist librarian assigned to the children's library on a rotational basis. In smaller libraries, the one professional or paraprofessional staff often supervises both the adult and children's section. Even where a librarian has special experience in children's work, he or she is unlikely to remain in that area for very long. I can think of three immediate examples of children's librarians who became (1) the head of a university library, (2) a cataloguer and documentalist, (3) a university lecturer in library studies. Because of the shortage and turnover of staff, young librarians often move up to top administrative positions, and out of children's service, very quickly.

In many cases, library service to children is provided by library assistants or others with little or no training, apart from that received on the job. Smaller branches and bookmobile services in particular have serious staffing problems. While the aim may be to have a paraprofessional, often a library assistant actually does the job.

School libraries are usually run by teachers, student prefects, or clerical staff - all untrained for library work. Moreover, teachers assigned to library duties often carry a full teaching load, yet they receive no extra allowance. The training and recognition of such personnel would do much to improve school library services.

## Education for Children's Librarians

Having surveyed library service for children in Africa and the types of personnel providing this service, let us turn to the crucial question of education and training. I will focus on two groups:

.../5.

1. professional librarians, and

2. teacher/librarians and teachers.

I have chosen to focus on these two groups because I believe a plan involving both the public libraries and the schools will be most fruitful in extending and improving children's library services. To accomplish this we need well-trained professionals, although not of the same type, in each area. While sub-professional staff will continue to play an important role for the foreseeable future, I would not advocate setting up a special, limited certificate in children's librarianship. Rather we might concentrate on in-service training for the short term and the gaining of professional qualifications for the long term:

1. Professional Librarians

What type of education and training might we give all professional librarians, who may become children's librarians at some point in their career? At the same time, what provision can we make for special training of a few with interest in this area?

Librarianship in Africa is increasingly becoming a graduate profession, but the type of qualification varies. Some qualifications are post graduate, such as a Masters degree or Post Graduate Diploma in Library Science taken after a first degree in another subject. Or library science may be taken as part of a first degree, often in combination with other subjects. The 2-year non graduate diploma is usually, but not always, considered a sub-professional qualification.

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Whatever the type of qualification the present programme of library education makes little provision for the training of children's librarians. This is perhaps understandable in terms of the aspirations and likely positions to be held by library school graduates. Relatively few will take up positions as children's librarians and even those who do may move to other positions within a few years. Moreover, the programmes as currently structured leave room for little specialization of any kind. The implication of this is that we need to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for work with children within a general library education and combine this with special short courses or workshops for those on the job.

One solution is to integrate aspects of children's librarianship into various core courses - bibliography, reference, selection, libraries and society, public library work, as well as library practice. The problem here is gaining the co-operation and commitment of the lecturers involved. One possibility is team-teaching, where a specialist in children's librarianship teaches units relating to children.

A second step is to provide at least one or two electives in children's librarianship and to structure the programme so that as many students as possible have opportunity to take them. For instance, one general elective is likely to be taken by more students than several very specialized courses. Or small unit courses of one as two credits may be created, so that students have an opportunity to sample a greater variety of topics. An example of the first option would be either:

.../7.

a. Library Services to Children - a 3-credit course including children's literature, public library work with children, and school libraries, or
b. User Groups - a 3-credit course with units on children, non-literates, the handicapped, etc. and of the second,
c. a series of one credit courses, including one on library services for children where students select three out of five.

A third step is to utilize relevant general education courses or the student's other areas of concentraion. For instance, library students at my university take twelve credits of education and educational psychology as part of their programme. General education courses in sociology, anthropology, literature, and the humanities would also be of value to children's librarians.

Generalist librarians with such background would have an idea of children's library work if they should take a position in this area. This background could then be supplemented on the job with special, short courses or workshops for children's librarians. Such courses could also be valuable for lower level staff, such as library assistants, who may have major responsibilities for children's services. The advantage of such courses is that they relate to the present needs and concerns of staff. The staff also have immediate opportunities to put what they have learned into practice.

.../8.

Finally, we want to make provision for those with special interest in children's librarianship, because we do need those who will take leadership roles, filling such positions as national organizer of children's services in Ghana. A greater degree of specialization is possible in certain programmes, for instance, a 2-year Masters, or 1-year Masters following a first degree in library science or a Post Graduate Diploma. More specialized electives or options in special projects could be offered to such students. Those with relevant background would be particularly good candidates for such a specialization, for instance, those with background in education or language arts. Such individuals could play a leadership role in developing children's services and organizing the type of in-service training for children's librarians suggested above.

2. Teacher/Librarians and Teachers

Library service to children could also be expanded through giving library training to teachers and teacher/librarians. School libraries are more accessible to most children than are public libraries. Unfortunately, school libraries are usually run by untrained teacher/librarians. The other teachers in the school also lack training and experience with libraries. Yet qualified teachers have certain advantages: their teacher education includes elements of child psychology, learning theory, educational resources and other subjects relevant to library work with children. If all teachers could be given the basics of use of libraries and library materials as part of their teacher education, the potential for expanding library services to children would be great indeed.

In addition to this general introduction, special programmes are needed to train teacher/librarians. This is because there is no provision for full-time professional librarians in the school system. Even those who have specialized in school librarianship end up in other areas. While most teacher/librarians are untrained, or at most have undergone a brief induction course, several promising programmes have recently started in Nigeria.

All involve post-secondary teacher education programmes which include (1) education (2) a teaching subject and (3) library science (in place of a second teaching subject). Some are degree programmes (4-year) while others are diploma programmes (3-year). For instance at the University of Maiduguri, education students offering library science as one of their teaching subjects, take at least 20 units (out of 90) in the basic areas of library science, including 10 units in children's and school librarianship. At Awka College of Education, students for the Nigerian Certificate in Education may also select library science in place of one teaching subject. In this case about one third of their credits (36 out of 108) are in library science, again with emphasis on school libraries. Some universities and colleges of education also offer use of the library or school librarianship courses to all education students. Unfortunately, attempts to introduce such courses at the lower teacher training level have not yet been successful. ~~and such schools produce the majority of~~

Another promising though less extensive programme is that of Cuttington University College in Liberia. All education students take an introduction to library science, and all students specializing in elementary education take children's literature. Students also participate in an educational materials workshop. In addition, separate courses are offered to interested students in school librarianship and the organization of libraries.

The details of the programme would depend on local circumstances, but the inclusion of an introduction to librarianship for all teachers and a specialization for teacher/librarians would do much both to improve education and to extend library services to greater numbers of children. The network of school libraries, staffed by trained teacher/librarians and supported by library-conscious teachers in co-operation with the public library's centralized structure, resources, and expertise would give a sound basis for library service to children.

Who are children's librarians in the African context? I suggest that for the present we concentrate our attention on two broad groups. From among the professional librarians, we need a few specialists who can provide leadership, supported by generalist librarians who have children's librarianship incorporated into their professional training and opportunities for in-service training as the need arises. For school library service, we need trained teacher/librarians supported by a corps of library-conscious teachers. By utilizing and developing available human resources in this way, I believe we can greatly extend and improve children's library services in Africa.

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## Abstract

Education and Training of Children's Librarians in Africa

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This paper begins by asking the question: Who provides library service to children in Africa? It found that children's services in public libraries are provided by a combination of generalist librarians, paraprofessionals and non-professional staff, while school libraries are usually run by untrained teacher/librarians. To improve children's library services the paper focuses on the education and training required by two groups: professional librarians for children's services in public libraries and teacher/librarians for school libraries. It recommends incorporating children's librarianship into general library education while providing an option for specialization, and introducing librarianship into the education of all teachers while offering a specialization for teacher/librarians. By providing trained personnel for children's work in both public and school libraries, an effective network of library service to children may be developed.